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Federal jury continues Hunt libel deliberations

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Herald Staff Writer

A Miami federal jury will continue this morning trying to decide whether Watergate figure E. Howard Hunt was libeled in 1978 by a Washington tabloid that claimed Hunt was about to be linked to the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

The six jury members deliberated for two hours Tuesday afternoon before U.S. District Judge James Kehoe sent them home to start fresh in the morning.

Controversial defense attorney Mark Lane, a vocal critic of the various investigations into Kennedy's murder, was at his thunderous best in his final argument, calling the jury a "people's commission" investigating the assassination.

"You are going to tell your grandchildren about this one," Lane told the jury. "You are a piece of American history."

Lane reiterated the stream of charges he had raised during the seven-day trial: The investigations were flawed, important facts were covered up, Hunt is a confessed perjurer, Hunt and the CIA hated Kennedy, Hunt can't prove where he was that day, Hunt's alibi witnesses were CIA liars, and so on.

"Why can't he leave us alone?" Lane said loudly, pointing at Hunt. "I don't mean my client. I mean *us*!"

After proclaiming the truth of the article, printed in the ultra-conservative Liberty Lobby's Spotlight tabloid, Lane hedged his bets by arguing that it was only the author's opinion and predictions and hence not libelous even if utterly false.

Hunt's lawyer, William Snyder of Baltimore, in turn recalled the testimony of ex-CIA employee Victor Marchetti, who wrote the article and who admitted on the stand that his source was a Washington rumor told by a Penthouse columnist — who since has denied telling it to Marchetti.

Mark Lane: Calls jury a 'people's commission.'

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